DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

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Classification/Control Markings

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15. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: ~~NOFORN TO AVOID EMBARRASSMENT TO HOST GOVERNMENT~~ ~~WARNING NOTICE-SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED~~

DOCR YES ☐ NO ☒

16. SUMMARY: ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ This IR provides information on the status of the governments counter-subversive operation in Tucuman Provinces and some observations by MG Viola, Army Chief of Staff, regarding terrorist activities in Argentina.

17. SUBJECT AND AREA CODES:

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20. ENCLOSURES:

None

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2. (U) On 9 February 1977, an article appeared in the Buenos Aires Newspaper "Clarin" titled "Tucuman Two Years Later." The news item pointed out that two years ago on 9 February 1975, the Armed Forces launched "Operation Independence" in Tucuman Province which was designed to eliminate Mario Santucho's subversive group, Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP). The article went on to say, that the former Provincial Government helped create the climate for subversion in Tucuman. In essence, the government was negligent, ignored the problems of the province, and allowed the guerrillas the opportunity to exploit the socio-economic disequilibrium that existed there.

3. (U) Upon entering the zone of operations, the Army recognized that it must fight on two fronts. First, the military had to defeat the subversives in the jungle and destroy their logistic support system. The second effort was to "correct the injustices" found in the province. BG Edgardo VILAS initiated the battle and was followed by BG Antonio BUSSI. The Army systematically attacked the guerrillas and the last survivors of the subversive movement reportedly fell on 12 November 1976.

4. (U) The Article concluded that General BUSSI is continuing the work in Tucuman by addressing the social problems that exist in the Province. It stated that the General, who is also Governor, is attacking the roots of insurgency, namely unemployment, poor economy, unsuitable schools, and inadequate sanitation. His ultimate objectives are to create a viable provincial economy and eliminate the problems caused by the cyclical sugar industry. BUSSI is quoted as stating "Now is the time to build the peace."

5. ~~(C/WNINTEL /NOFORN)~~ On 4 February 1977, Army Chief of Staff Major General VIOLA briefed the commanders and Directors of Military Institutes at Campo de Mayo on the situation in Argentina. According to a source, the substance of VIOLA's presentation was similar to ones given earlier in the week to Senior Army Commanders and members of the Army Staff. MG VIOLA told the assembled group that the terrorists problem is now centered in the urban areas. The guerrillas are now concentrating on the infiltration of the labor unions, factories and the church. The general added that the subversives have been relatively unsuccessful in their efforts in the labor sector since the Army had anticipated this possibility and had taken necessary steps to preclude infiltration (b)(3):10 USC 424 The Chief of Staff was not optimistic, however, with regard to the Catholic Church. He identified subversive infiltration in the church as a significant problem for the government and one

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which offered no easy solution. He claimed that "Third World" priests were susceptible to communist propaganda thereby making it easier for the guerrillas to drive a wedge between the government and the church.

COMMENT: (~~Confidential~~) The Argentine Army has had tremendous success against the guerrillas in the rural area. There have been no significant actions in Tucuman for months and the province is slowly returning to normal. General BUSSI has long acknowledged the need to improve the socio-economic conditions in the province and is doing all in his power, both as military commander and the Governor, to bring these changes about (See IR (b)(3):10 USC 424 On the urban front the military have dealt hammer blows to the terrorists and their infrastructure. Activities like assassinations and bombings continue, however, since they are low cost, low risk ventures and ideally suited for an organization that is trying to maintain a low profile. It is quite plausible that the terrorists, who have lost a significant portion of their combat capability, would now concentrate their efforts on the infiltration of unions, factories and the church. Priests who may be legitimately concerned with the welfare of their poor parishoners will become suspect should they do anything out of the ordinary or speak out against the government. No matter how sincere the clergy may be, they will likely be misinterpreted by a government that is bent on destroying terrorism. If the guerrillas are successful in driving a wedge between the government and the church as VIOLA fears, the situation could become more serious. The VIDELA administration has enough problems on the economic front and in the labor sector without taking on the Catholic Church.

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